



Deer Management - Citizens Task Force (Pierre, SD)



Background

The deer numbers were becoming more abundant and widely distributed within the city limits of Pierre. Many people, had developed an emotional bond with deer; other residents recognized deer as a natural part of our community but felt their existence with people is conditional. The management of deer within a city frequently focused on symptoms. Some Pierre citizens expressed concerns some of the deer have become a threat to public safety and personal property, and others mentioned concerns for the welfare of the deer. To deal with the deer concerns expressed by the city residents, the Pierre City Commission passed a resolution in 2007 to create the Deer Management Citizens Task Force. A nine member volunteer group was given the task of determining whether Pierre had an urban deer problem and to identify possible options to be included in a deer management program.

The Task Force challenged the residents of Pierre to learn how to live with deer in their neighborhoods. Individuals had many different thoughts on how interactions with wildlife affect lives and property. Some people enjoy seeing deer in their yards and provide food for the deer. Are we creating other issues when we invite deer to come into yards seeking food? Complaints were expressed with the deer destroying or eating roses or browsing on other expensive plants. Such cases rarely resulted in negative results for



the deer. Are we creating a nuisance by feeding and watching wildlife? What values do we have with deer living in close proximity to people? In many cases, the urbanized deer lose their fear of people and feeding in an urban environment becomes an everyday activity for the deer.

The goal of the task force was to design and implement a short and long term Management Plan for the City of Pierre to manage the number of deer that are socially acceptable within the City and can co-exist with the local human population.

Feeding wildlife

People enjoy watching wildlife and provide food or feeders for their return. Deer often congregate and travel through neighborhoods to feed, but many people attempt to discourage the deer from coming into their yards.

To resolve these problems, the Pierre City Commission adopted an ordinance that would prohibit or restrict feeding of certain wildlife:

No person being the owner or occupant of any parcel of real property within the corporate limits of the city shall place thereon, or allow to remain thereon, any unnatural food source, nor shall any person place such unnatural food source upon the real property of another. It shall be an affirmative defense to any prosecution hereunder that the unnatural food source was placed not less than five (5) feet above the ground and was not accessible to deer, or that the unnatural food source was placed in good faith for the purpose of feeding domestic livestock or pets by or at the request of a person owning or having responsibility for the domestic livestock or pets, or that the unnatural food source was placed in good faith for a purpose other than attracting deer and that the attraction of deer is only an incidental result.

Identifying deer damage

Before residents spend time and money on what is thought to be deer damage, it must be determined if deer are really responsible. Other wildlife such as rabbits and rodents may also be culprits. Since deer do not have upper incisors, browsing often leaves a jagged or torn surface on twigs or stems. Most rodents leave a clean-cut surface on the vegetation they are eating. Deer tracks are distinctive and the height at which deer browse often eliminates other wildlife. Deer are most active in the evening and early morning hours when neighborhoods are generally the most quiet.

In general, citizens favor non-lethal control techniques; however, non-lethal methods have demonstrated only limited effectiveness in reducing and controlling the increasing



deer numbers. The deer numbers can be effectively controlled by lethal methods, but such control is less acceptable to urban publics.

Deer capture and transfer

Deer can be relocated to other areas, but they need to be trapped, netted, or immobilized with tranquilizers. Unfortunately, the deer suffer great stress during such transfer activities. This non-lethal option is often considered but has high costs and losses of deer due to the capture methods or after the relocation. There are also safety concerns for those handling the deer during the capture or transfer.

Survey and harvest of deer numbers

The Task Force requested the SD Game, Fish & Parks (GFP) to survey the deer numbers within the city limits of Pierre. GFP agreed to administer a scientific survey of the deer numbers in September 2007. This survey resulted in deer numbers that totaled at least 200 and the Task Force committee made a recommendation to harvest 45 antlerless deer to the Pierre City Commission. The Commission and the Secretary of GFP agreed to a harvest permit of 45 deer from December 2007 through March 2008. A similar survey was conducted by city staff and volunteers in 2008, that resulted a count of ??? deer. Based on these numbers, task force requested and gained approval of the City of Pierre and the GFP for the harvest of 60 antlerless deer from December 2008 through February 20, 2009.

Sharpshooting

The deer harvest has been done by sharpshooting involving city law enforcement staff that were trained to lethally remove the deer with a small caliber firearm. The following methods were used for this program: 1) when possible, brain or spine shots were taken to ensure a quick and humane death of the deer, 2) the harvested deer were transported to a closed and sheltered Pierre city facility for processing, and 3) the meat was distributed to those limited individuals who made a request to the city to receive a deer based on the deer harvest for that year.

Handling deer problems

Deer can be excluded by using various types of fences and barriers. Permanent or temporary electric fences work best, but most residential property owners prefer not to erect large fences to protect their yards. Smaller woven wire fencing can be used to protect individual plants until they are large enough to be less desirable to deer. Deer generally eat only the new growth on the tips of tree branches. Once they develop hard



woody stems the main body of the plant is less susceptible. However, the tips and buds remain vulnerable and deer browsing will prevent flowering and new growth.

Please Check Out The Following Links:

[*Deer Problems*](#)

[*Deer-Resistant Plants*](#)

[*Deer Control Pest Control For Nuisance Deer*](#)

[*Deer-Resistant Landscaping*](#)

Repellents and Toxicants

Various repellents discourage deer foraging when the repellent is applied directly to specific plants. Repellents near the times that you have experienced the deer browsing. Some repellents are placed on the plants and deter feeding due to their unpleasant odor or taste. The repellents need to be reapplied periodically and after rain or snow showers. Repellents may be found at most feed supply stores, or distributors can be located through a quick search of the Internet. Key words to help you search the Internet are “wildlife control” or “wildlife management.”

Scare devices often are used to address nuisance deer problems. A number of commercially available products employ motion-sensors that emit amplified, ultrasonic bursts of sound when activated. Manufacturers say the frequency is inaudible to humans, but stressful for deer. Most of these devices are designed to reset themselves after the deer have moved out of the area. These products are relatively new on the market.

There are many types of commercial and home remedy repellents that may work on deer. The key is to use them early, before the deer become accustomed to browsing on your plants. Repellents may serve to keep deer out of your yard, until your neighbors start to use them. Repellents may not work if the deer are hungry enough. Most repellents are short-lived and wash off with rain or wear off in a short period of time. Contact repellents can be applied directly to trees during the dormant period; they reduce the palatability of plants by making them taste bad. Area repellents can be applied near plants; they repel deer by odor. “Deer-Away” Big Game Repellent, Hinder, Thiram, Tankage, and Ro-pel are examples of repellents. Bags of human hair can work, but effectiveness is inconsistent. Many people tie small bars of soap to trees or around their garden. Colorful flagging, draped across trails used by deer, presents a visual deterrent.

Many plants are resistant to deer browsing and should be selected where possible. Though some plants are resistant to damage, they can be less effective depending on



the availability of natural browse. Local nurseries should be able to provide you with a list of plants and reference books that will help you in your selection. It is recommended that native plant species be selected wherever possible. These plants will be better adapted to local conditions than their exotic counterparts.

For your landscaping or garden choices, you should talk to local garden or tree specialists in selecting tree, shrub, and plant species that may be more deer resistant. Unfortunately, this approach may only displace the deer to another area to feed.

Deer may also be restricted from areas by fencing, but to be restrictive, the fence may require an eight foot height. Other fencing options include woven plastic netting installed around specific problem areas. Regular inspection and maintenance of these fences increase their effectiveness.

Who Do You Call

The Pierre Police Department is responsible for any wildlife problems within the Pierre City limits. If you wish to report a wildlife concern or damage to your property, please contact the Pierre Police Department or you may contact Animal Control Officer Chris Gross at 605-773-7410 or by email at Chris.Gross@ci.pierre.sd.us

Summary

Managing deer is more of a people problem than a deer problem. Some people want to get rid of the deer and others want the deer protected. It will be difficult to meet everyone's needs or satisfactions in the city of Pierre. Various methods can be used with attempts to reduce, control, and manage deer populations in the long term. If you live in an area with a high deer numbers, it is recommended not to spend a lot of money on expensive ornamental plants. Choose plant species for your yard that will not attract the deer by providing browse or food and you will reduce your deer problems.

Deer Carcass and Meat Handling

Once a reduction harvest permit has been approved by South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks, the City of Pierre will issue a public notice in the Pierre Capital Journal and other local media to inform the public of the availability of deer carcasses for personal need. Interested parties will be able to get a field dressed deer carcass free of charge.

For those individuals who would like to obtain deer meat you will need to call the Police administrative number 605-773-7413, between 8 AM and 5 PM, Monday through Friday



to be put on list for a deer carcass. The full name, address, daytime and evening phone number will be recorded. Interested parties will also be asked if they are willing to accept more than one deer. Preference will be given for Pierre residents.

Orders for carcasses will be on a first come first serve basis with a limit of one per household. If the number of harvested deer exceeds the number of people on the list, the individuals who indicated they would accept more than one deer will be contacted again to see if they want an additional deer.

If the number of deer harvested exceeds the number of people willing to accept them, the City may contract with Steamboat Game Processing to process the deer for donation to the local Food Pantry.

Interested parties will be called in advance of the harvest so that they would be better prepared to accept the carcass. Notification will be 18-48 hours in advance of the harvest date. The recipients will be asked to pick up the deer at a predetermined time and location.

If a person is unable to accept a deer at the predetermined time, the next person on the list will be contacted, and the first choice will remain on the list for the next harvest date. If after three attempts, the individual is unable to accept a carcass, their name will go to the bottom of the list.

The selective harvest will be conducted by the Animal Control Officer, in cooperation with GF&P Conservation Officers under the rules and regulations set forth in the harvest permit. It will be necessary for at least two or three people to conduct the selective harvest, transport and prepare the carcass for pickup by the recipient.

After the kill the carcass will be taken to the City landfill for excavation of the entrails and to hang to cool until picked up by the recipient.

Besides the Animal Control Officer, an additional City employee will have to be available to transfer the deer to the recipient if the Animal Control Officer is not available.

A list of all recipients, along with their full name, address, and phone number must be recorded.

The list will be filed at the Police Department for review by the public and GF&P officials as required.

If a deer carcass would need to be held, it would go to Steamboat Game and Fish for a "skin, quarter and cool" for 24 hours. The charge for this service is \$30.00.



If there are insufficient people to accept the carcasses, the City may opt to have the deer processed into ground meat for donation to the Food Pantry. The cost for this service is \$50.00. Donations from public service and conservation organizations may be solicited to help pay the cost of processing.

The prices listed above are for the 2007-08 season, and are subject to change.